## **United States Department of Agriculture**



Natural Resources Conservation Service 375 Jackson Street, Suite 600 St. Paul, MN 55101-1854

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## To Be Sent Via Electronic Mail

July 23, 2004

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-04-38

SUBJECT: LTP - EQIP - ELECTRONIC MANUAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Purpose. To inform offices of the new EQIP manual availability

Expiration Date. September 30, 2004

The revised EQIP Manual, 440-Conservation Programs Manual - Part 515, is now available on the NRCS electronic directives system. Employees may access the electronic directives system from either the NRCS web site or the my.NRCS site. Under the Electronic Directives link, click on Manuals, then Title 440 – CPM, and then on Part 515.

The manual, along with the joint NRCS/FSA MOU, provides the operational policies and procedures for EQIP. Some Minnesota supplements to the CPM will be reissued to be incorporated into the new manual.

Office should retain and archive the old EQIP manual. It will continue to be referenced for those contracts signed under its policies.

Some significant change to policies which should be noted:

- Tribal exception to attribute EQIP payments (515.61.o). In cases where payments cannot be attributed to any one individual, the payment will be attributed to the Tribe's tax identification number.
- Participation by NRCS employees (515.61.p). Employees must disqualify themselves from official duties where the actions could raise questions of impartiality.
- Land enrolled in CRP (515.62.f). Land enrolled in CRP may only be offered during the last year
  of the contract and no practice applied until the contract has ended. Land in other conservation
  programs is eligible for EQIP provided EQIP does not pay for the same practice on the same
  land.
- Application Ranking Process (515.82) and Processing Applications (515.83). These sections have been substanially rewritten to reflect the changes of the 2002 legislation.
- CPO signatures not required (515.90.a). No signature is required on the EQIP Plan of Operations. The participant is agreeing to the Plan of Operations by signing Block 10 of the CCC-1200. Participants should still thoroughly understand the PO and its requirements.
- Contract Requirements (515.111). Provides a summary table of contract requirements and signature requirements.
- Contract modification minimum (515.112.e). Contract modifications for increases of less than \$300 will not be processed.
- Contract status reviews (515.113). Written notification to the participant at least 90 days before expiration if any contract items remain to be completed.
- Verification of Limited Resource and Beginning Farmers (515.113.d). NRCS to conduct a random 5 percent review of all such contracts.
- Equitable Relief (515.114). Entire new section for providing equitable relief. Equitable relief may only be granted by the State Conservationist or above.

 Recovery of Costs (515.116). Entire new section. Cost recovery of 20 percent of the total obligation applies to terminated contracts with an Appendix dated 7/03. State Conservationist may waive all or part of the cost recovery.

Questions should be directed to your Assistant State Conservationist (FO) or through the area to Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist.

/s/ Tim Koehler acting for

WILLIAM HUNT State Conservationist

DIST: AC

DC ARC AEng

Rich Giles, WQS, Redwood Falls, MN Jeff King, WQS, Dodge Center, MN Steve Lutes, WQS, Long Prairie, MN

**EQIP State Office Team**